

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-5. (canceled).

6. (currently amended): A process for producing a natural cheese, which comprises:

(1) incubating a lactic acid bacteria starter ~~comprising a lactic acid bacteria with a culture medium containing milk to which component wherein~~ yeast extract is added, wherein the lactic acid bacteria starter comprises a lactic acid bacterium belonging to *Lactobacillus gasseri* having a disinfection potency against *Helicobacter pylori*;

(2) adding the incubated lactic acid bacteria starter to a raw milk;

(3) forming a curd from the raw milk mixed with the lactic acid bacteria starter;

(4) removing whey from thus formed curd; and

(5) forming pressed pieces of the curd including molding and pressing the curd,

wherein the process further comprises

adding additional yeast extract to the raw milk at the same time or after adding the lactic acid bacteria starter to the raw milk in step (2), and before formation of the curd in step (3); and

incubating the curd obtained in the above (5), at 20 to 35°C for 16 to 26 hours to produce the natural cheese, wherein the incubation of the curd is carried out without cooling the curd after molding and pressing ~~wherein the lactic acid bacteria starter comprises a lactic acid~~

~~bacterium belonging to *Lactobacillus gasseri* having a disinfection potency against *Helicobacter pylori*; and~~

wherein the additional yeast extract added is in an amount of 0.05 to 0.2 % per liter of the raw milk;

wherein the natural cheese comprises the lactic acid bacterium belonging to *Lactobacillus gasseri* having a disinfection potency against *Helicobacter pylori*, wherein the natural cheese has a viable cell count of *Lactobacillus gasseri* in the number of 10^7 cfu/g or more when preserved at a temperature of 10°C or less for 6 months.

7-8. (canceled).

9. (previously presented): The process according to claim 6, wherein the lactic acid bacteria starter is a mixture of the lactic acid bacterium belonging to *Lactobacillus gasseri* having a disinfection potency against *Helicobacter pylori* and another strain of lactic acid bacterium.

10. (currently amended): The process according to claim 6, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is *Lactobacillus gasseri* OLL 2716 (FERM BP-6999) ~~or a mutant thereof~~.